INTERMOUNTAIN STATION
Central Reference File
No. 0.73

FOREST SERVICE
RECEIVED
MAY 27 1948

Research Note

NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN
FOREST AND RANGE EXPERIMENT STATION

No. 62 April 1948 Missoula, Montana

POLE PRODUCTION CONTINUED UPWARD IN 1947 1/

Ben M. Huey
Division of Forest Economics

Over 817,000 poles were produced in the Northern Rocky Mountain region in 1947. This was an increase of 15 percent over the previous peak year of 1946. The sustained high level of production is attributed to a carry-over of production started in 1946, to continued large-scale buying by Rural Electrification Administration cooperatives, and to an adequate supply of labor and equipment.

All three states in the region increased their pole output. North Idaho production went up 25 percent from 1946, Northeast Washington 13 percent, and Montana 8 percent, making an over-all increase of 15 percent for the three areas. Montana continued to lead the other two areas in total production but furnished a slightly smaller proportion of the total in 1947 than in 1946. Table 1 shows the number of poles cut by species and by states in 1947.

Table 1. Number of poles produced in 1947

Species	Northern Rocky Mountain Region				Percent of total
	Montana	N. Idaho	N. E. Washington	Total	
	Number of poles				Percent
Lodgepole pine	269,141	30,020	52,149	351,310	43.0
Western redcedar	16,984	161,274	52,614	230,872	28.2
Western larch	32,704	124,902	64,384	221,990	27.2
Douglas-fir	5,905	568	-	6,473	0.8
Miscellaneous	-	-	6,557	6,557	0.8
Total	324,734	316,764	175,704	817,202	-
Percent	39.7	38.8	21.5	100.0	100.0

1/ The Rocky Mountain Pole and Treating Association sponsored the survey of pole production for 1947. All of the pole producing companies reported their production. The cooperation of these companies in supplying the data is acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

INT - FILE COPY

The most significant change in species production was in larch. From 1946 to 1947 larch output doubled while in the same period cedar dropped 6 percent and lodgepole pine increased 3 percent. Only small quantities of Douglas-fir and miscellaneous species, mostly ponderosa pine, were received at pole plants.

Table 2. Comparison of pole production by species - 1946 and 1947

Species	1946	1947	Percent change
	- - - -Number of pieces- - - -		Percent
Lodgepole pine	340,048	351,310	+ 3.3
Western redcedar	245,310	230,872	- 5.9
Western larch	111,540	221,990	+ 99.0
Douglas-fir	12,419	6,473	- 47.9
Miscellaneous	1,144	6,557	+ 473.2
Total	710,461	817,202	+ 15.0

Although pole production continued to gain in 1947, there is still an ample timber supply to support the pole industry in this region at a much higher level. Providing good cutting practices are followed and the market takes the quantity offered, the pole cut could be about 3 million pieces annually on a continuous basis, or more than three times the 1947 output. Lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, and larch are the three most promising species for increased production. It is estimated that nearly 1 million more lodgepole pine and a similar quantity of Douglas-fir poles could be cut. Cedar pole output on the other hand cannot be expanded and may even decline somewhat.

An increase is possible in all states in the region. Based on the availability of timber, Montana production could be stepped up nearly six times, North Idaho three times, and Northeast Washington only slightly.

Based on the best available data it is estimated that production of large (40 feet and longer) poles can be increased six times and small (35 feet and shorter) poles could be tripled without impairing the timber resource and the stability of the industry in the region. In other words, over 2 million more poles could be cut than were harvested in 1947. A substantial access road program will be needed to realize much of the proposed increase. The added cut in large poles would be mainly in Douglas-fir, larch, and lodgepole pine. Cedar should be held at approximately the 1947 level. In small poles, a decrease is indicated for cedar and larch and an increase for lodgepole and Douglas-fir.

Table 3. Relation of the cut by large and small poles to the desirable cut

Species and size	1947 cut	Desirable cut 1/	Change indicated
	Thousands of poles		
Large poles	175	1,046	+ 871
Small poles	642	2,006	+ 1,364
All poles	817	3,052	+ 2,235
Large poles by species			
Douglas-fir	3	479	+ 476
Larch	44	202	+ 158
Lodgepole pine	60	216	+ 156
Miscellaneous	1	82	+ 81
Cedar	67	67	None
Small poles by species			
Douglas-fir	4	392	+ 388
Larch	178	134	- 44
Lodgepole pine	292	1,224	+ 932
Miscellaneous	5	114	+ 109
Cedar	164	143	- 21

1/ The volume of timber of pole quality which could be cut annually.

Table 4. Distribution of production by length classes

Species	Length classes					
	25' & under	30'	35'	40'	45' & over	All
	Percent of total					
Lodgepole pine	11	33	39	12	5	100
Cedar	20	25	26	13	16	100
Larch	24	20	36	14	6	100
Douglas-fir	3	21	35	23	18	100
Miscellaneous	10	27	37	18	8	100
All species 1947	14	25	35	16	10	100
All species 1946	4	13	50	15	18	100

Table 5. Distribution of production by A.S.A. classes

Species	A.S.A. classes										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	All
	Percent of total										
Lodgepole pine	-	1	2	5	15	35	33	5	3	1	100
Cedar	2	4	7	12	17	20	20	9	8	1	100
Larch	1	1	4	13	21	25	24	3	4	4	100
Douglas-fir	2	5	12	19	24	23	14	1	-	-	100
Miscellaneous	-	-	2	8	20	30	37	2	1	-	100
All species 1947	1	2	5	11	20	27	26	4	3	1	100
All species 1946	*	*	*	16	16	46	19	2	1	*	100

*Less than 1 percent.